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PREPARING POULTRY FOR EXHIBITION

BY

E. COBB, F.Z.S.

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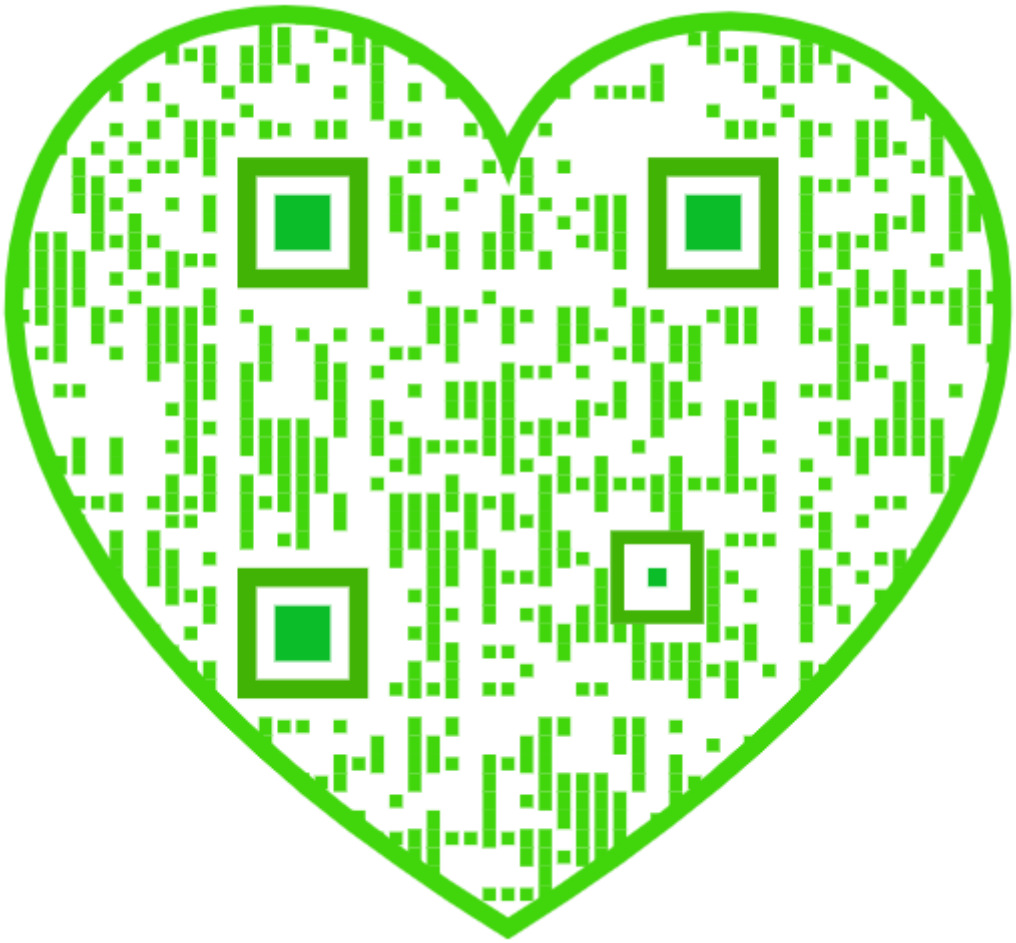

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PREPARING POULTRY

FOR

EXHIBITION.

SECTION VI.

Before commencing the actual process of preparing different breeds of poultry for the show pen, we desire to touch on a matter closely connected with the same, viz., the disqualifying or "passing" certain birds at shows by judges. We have for some time endeavoured to bring this matter before the Poultry Club, but owing to various circumstances have hitherto been prevented from doing so. Either we have been unable to attend the committee meetings, or when we have attended and given notice of our desire to bring this matter before the attention of the committee, there has been so much urgent business to be gone through that no opportunity has hitherto arisen. Undoubtedly we should have wished to have had this subject dealt with by the Poultry Club before it became necessary for us to deal with it here, but, as previously stated, owing to various causes, such has not been possible. In our opinion, a judge who honestly desires to put down fraud is placed, according to the present rules of the club, in a most unenviable position, and unless our suggestion, or some similar or better one, be adopted, we see no prospect of ever putting an end to many malpractices only too well known to the majority of exhibitors.

To understand our meaning, we must give a few illustrations to show how it is that a judge is, by the present regulations of the club, placed between two fires—the Poultry Club on the one hand, and the disqualified exhibitor on the other.

Take the case of a bird with a trimmed comb. That hundreds of these are shown and win, we think no one with any great experience in the Fancy will deny. In this respect we might mention a conversation we had a few years since with a prominent exhibitor *re* Hamburghs. We informed him that a certain gentleman said that the winner's comb at the show we were attending had been trimmed. His reply was:—"You tell Mr. —— that if *he* doesn't trim Hamburgh's combs, it's simply because he doesn't know how to." Most judges know that this, to a great extent, is true, but if they desire to continue as judges they are powerless to act. Let one disqualify; the result would probably be that the exhibitor and two or three friends will attend the inquiry, and prove to the satisfaction of the committee that the bird injured itself against some wire netting, or it was done through fighting, or something of that sort, perhaps, this being really in this instance the true state of affairs, but still that is not our point, and the upshot of which is that the disqualification is disowned, and the person who receives the brunt of the battle and loses prestige is no one but the poor judge, who, rightly to our mind, disqualified a bird that was not shown in a natural condition. Again, take the case of a laced or spangled bird. Are not these sometimes shown with a hatful of feathers extracted in order to make the lacing or spangling even? But few judges would care to disqualify, knowing full well the exhibitor has only to state that the bird is moulting, or that he has a number of "feather pluckers" in his pen to get out of the difficulty.

Of course, in the case of stitches being observable in the lobes, etc., or the insertion of another bird's feathers in the tail being detected, the proof of fraud is self evident, and one would have thought that in the case of a judge removing, in

the presence of the show secretary and some of the committee, black colouring matter from a black legged fowl's leg, would have been ample evidence to convict one. But such is not the case. By proving to the satisfaction of the committee that such black substance came there by the bird running on cinders is sometimes sufficient to exonerate the exhibitor.

Lastly, take the case of short tails or tailless birds. For instance, an Indian Game in the first place, and a Cochin in the second. A clear proof of having moulted, or is moulting, is all sufficient for the purpose.

Now, notwithstanding all these difficulties to be contended with in getting a disqualification upheld, we know of a case where a gentleman desired the Poultry Club to censure a certain judge for having expressed an opinion, after judging was over, that a certain bird that he had "passed" was trimmed in the comb, that instead of "passing" he should have "disqualified." To *prove* that a bird's comb has been cut with scissors or a lancet, and not done accidentally by a piece of old tin or by some other cause, is, in nine out of ten cases of trimmed combs, an impossibility for the judge to do.

The upshot, then, of the whole business, to our mind, is this:—If it is the desire of the Poultry Club, and of the Fancy generally—which we do not for a moment think it is in either case—that birds should be shown in an unnatural condition, let it be clearly stated so, so that the young fancier who is inexperienced in the "art" of trimming may stand an equal chance with the man who by his skilfulness in the operation does not give strong enough proof of fraud to be convicted at the present time. But, if it be the general desire that birds should be shown as nature made them, then give judges a chance to put a stop to trimmed combs, plucked bodies, coloured legs, and imperfect tails. In every case that we have just named we feel sure that there are times when birds appear in the show pen under such conditions without the remotest act of fraud on the part of the exhibitor, and it is hard on the exhibitor to be disqualified for an act he or she never committed, and also hard on the judge, for the reason that the exhibitor can prove probably how the imperfection occurred, and is most annoyed with the judge for his conduct in the matter. But if "fraud" was not a question at all, then we think that the atmosphere could be greatly cleared of difficulties.

If the Poultry Club were, for instance, to insert a clause in their show rules something to this effect: "Any bird exhibited at this show insufficiently feathered, or with any substance on its legs of the same colour as the bird's legs should be, or with any damage to the comb, which in the judge's opinion adds to its perfection, he shall place a 'passed' card on the bird's pen, stating the reason. Such 'passed' cards in no way to be considered as a disqualification, but simply that the exhibit is not in a fit state to be shown."

Of course the ordinary rule about fraudulent dyeing and trimming would still remain in force. Thus a Minorca that by some means or another had a false serration knocked off would have a card on its pen with the word "passed" printed thereon, and underneath the words "On account of" would read "back of third serration damaged."

Should a judge, judging under Poultry Club rules, refuse to place such a card on a bird's pen, when the same was pointed out to him as coming within the meaning of this rule, then, unless he could satisfy the committee of the Poultry Club that such was not the case, the Poultry Club should refuse to countenance any show where the said judge was officiating.

As we said before, there will be no question of fraud about these "passed" cards, they will simply mean that the bird is not in a fit condition for showing, so that no stigma will lie against the honest exhibitor, and the dishonest ones would soon give over a practice which they found was bringing in no grist to the mill.

Suitable Time to Commence.

Common to most beginners in the Fancy is the idea that the only preparation necessary to prepare a fowl for the show pen is the training of the bird, a week or two before the exhibition is due, to hold itself properly, and, just prior to sending it off, to see that its comb, legs, etc., are washed clean.

Owing to this mistaken idea, we venture to say that hundreds of excellent exhibition specimens are annually ruined for the show pen.

That the training of a bird to hold itself well in the show pen, and that the body,

comb, face, lobes, plumage and legs are properly prepared and cleaned, we fully admit is a most important item in the fowl's preparation. But no amount of such preparation will ever make a bird that has been mismanaged from its birth into a good show specimen. We consider that the time to start thinking about preparing birds for exhibition is when they are still running with the hen, or in the rearer. Let it be clearly understood that we by no means wish to imply that it is absolutely necessary, in order to be successful, that one and all of the hints that we mention *must* be carried out. Far from it; it is simply wonderful how well some birds thrive under the most trying circumstances, but if the reader has the time as well as the accommodation, then, by the adoption of our advice, he will have gone a considerable way in doing all that he could to ensure success.

During Early Stages.

Frequently it is found that large combed varieties grow up with "crooked" or "thumb marked" combs, and although we doubt not that such faults may be at times derived from the parent stock, we feel convinced that in the majority of cases it is owing to the leaving of the youngsters too long under the care of the mother hen. Over and over again have we seen fanciers allow their chickens to still be covered by the mother when the cockerels have grown combs half an inch in length. The consequence is, even if the weight of the hen's body does not force the comb completely over, that the comb is pressed down and made to bulge, more or less, in the front, causing the "thumb mark" to appear. But supposing that the chick does not suffer by such a mishap, still, the leaving of cockerels of such breeds as Minoreas, Leghorns, and the like, under the mother's case for any length of time after their combs start growing, or even in a warm rearer, is detrimental to their chances of eventually turning into exhibition specimens. By being kept warm the comb is forced considerably, and in consequence outgrows its strength, being somewhat similar to a hothouse plant, which, when put out to rough it, quickly shrivels and falls over on to one side. We purposely do not state any age at which we would advise the removal of the cockerels of such breeds from the hen, for the simple reason that different strains of the same breed mature much earlier in this respect than others, and also that the time of year and the conditions under which the birds are kept and fed have a great deal to do with the proper time that they should be parted. Nevertheless, we strongly urge breeders of the heavy combed varieties to remove the cockerels from the care of the hen as soon as the youngsters' combs have grown to the height of, say, a quarter of an inch. Should this happen at such time of year that the removal would be likely to check their growth owing to cold, a warmed rearer must be provided for them of some description. When only a few have to be thus accommodated, anyone with a little ingenuity can easily make a home made contrivance to answer the purpose, the heat being supplied by a hot water bottle covered with flannel and replenished two or three times a day or oftener if necessary.

But now comes another point in reference to the same subject. It doesn t answer, when eventually the birds are removed from all natural or artificial heat, to crowd them into a small house, or even to place a large number in a very large house, because in either case they crowd up together in one corner, trampling on each other and often causing injury in this way, but more particularly from the fact that by this crowding together some of them become far more heated, and their combs forced to grow to a much greater extent than if they were under the hen or in a warmed rearer.

Remember that with the breeds under discussion the size of comb is not nearly of so much importance in the cockerels as that the same should be of good quality and firmly set upon the head, and that the bird that takes the longest time to grow his comb is generally the firmest combed cockerel in the whole brood.

Separating the Sexes.

Where possible always separate the cockerels from the pullets. With light breeds, such as Minorcas, Leghorns, Andalusians, etc, it is best to divide them as soon as they are capable of leaving the hen or the warmth of the rearer. If this method is adopted there will be very few, if any, of what are known in the Fancy as "cocky" youngsters, birds that shoot their combs at about six weeks old, and have the shape of an adult fowl when their legs are about three inches

long. Slower maturing varieties, such as Langshans, Brahmas, Cochins and others, may be allowed to run longer together, but the sooner the separation takes place the less chance will here be of any harm being done. The reason for this separation of the sexes is chiefly on account of the extra size that is thus obtainsd.

A cockerel's growth is greatly checked as soon as he commences to pay attention to the pullets, and a pullet, as a rule, never makes a fine bird if she starts laying when quite young, and we are convinced that pullets are brought on to lay much quicker when a male bird is running with them than they would have done if the cock had been absent from the pen.

Advantages of Shade.

Almost everyone in the Fancy knows that in order to keep white birds in good exhibition trim it is necessary to protect them from the hot sun; but the same law applies—though, perhaps, not to as great an extent—with black or coloured fowls. If kept much in the sun, a Plymouth Rock's hackles, shoulders, back, and saddle will become much tanned, the hackles turning yellow and the back brown. A silver Wyandotte cock will become completely spoilt, as a rule, on the top, for instead of being silver it will become yellow. A black Hamburgh, especially a hen, instead of retaining that beautiful beetle green sheen, will frequently turn, more or less, to a brown colour. A buff Cochin will become paler in colour, and even a Pekin duck, whose colour should be yellow, or rather canary, and in which case one might suppose that the effects of the sun would be beneficial, considering that with most breeds its tendency is to turn the plumage yellow, is ruined for exhibition purposes by the sun turning it white.

The fact is, that the sun's effect is such as to draw out the colour from all feathers in a given variety that are coloured, and to tan those feathers that are white, or that have a small amount of colouring matter in them. Anyhow, it is impossible to get the bloom so much admired in the show pen on to birds that have not ample shade during the heat of the day, and if you have no natural accommodation, such as a coppice free from foxes, about which to rear your birds, we strongly advocate, if you wish to obtain the best results, that you fix up some protection previous to the time when they start to moult out into their adult plumage, so as to guard the birds during the heat of the day from the sun's rays.

Badly Moulted Tails.

We used to think that the reason why some cockerels and cocks seem unable at times to properly moult out their tails, the feathers often appearing with a hard, dry sheath on them, and the webbing more or less injured by the bird's beak in its endeavours to get the feathers free of this sheath, was on account of weakness, more or less, of the fowl's constitution. We still think that to a certain extent this is so, but that the chief cause of the mischief is insects. No doubt these pests lower the fowl's constitution very considerably, and the bird has really not strength enough to stand the strain of growing new feathers; but besides this, we believe that the insects *themselves* directly injure the young quills. It is, therefore, most important to frequently overhaul the young stock as well as the old birds previous to moulting time, and, if it is found necessary, give them a good dusting with insect powder, or with a solution of paraffin.

Moulting.

How very annoying it is to have a good bird late in the season in one's pen, and yet not be able to exhibit it because it hasn't moulted out, and is still in its old feathers. Again insects are chiefly the cause, in that they have weakened the fowl's system, and it has insufficient strength left to cast off the old and to grow the new plumage. Still, not infrequently can the cause be traced to want of experience, or through neglect on the part of the owner.

Again, in regard to this question of moulting, what a number of fanciers who have ample time and accommodation, or who have the means to easily provide the latter at a trifling cost, yet allow the male bird to run with the hens during the whole of the summer time. Such birds not infrequently become so run down that they have not sufficient strength to stand up. Is it reasonable to suppose that a bird who has been losing strength for some months, just at the very time when he ought to be recouping himself to undergo the most trying ordeal of moulting, is likely to make an early and quick moult? Certainly, we do not think so, and

are convinced that the best results are obtainable by taking the male bird away as soon as the breeding season is over and placing him in a "cock box," as fully described in Section IV. As to the hens, their constitution is often weakened by the owner checking the broody fever, and forcing the birds to lay more eggs within a given time than nature tells them they ought to, and, therefore, as in the case of the male bird, they have not sufficient strength to quickly pass through a successful moult.

Let the first care be given to ascertain that the birds are perfectly free from vermin *before* the moulting season commences. In some cases this can be accomplished by simply giving the fowls a thorough good dusting with insect powder, and well paraffining the house, etc., but with others—some that have large clusters of insects' eggs at the roots of the feathers—such precaution is often inadequate to properly destroy these pests, and we strongly advise that in such a case the paraffin solution (viz., one third paraffin and two thirds water, boiled together for a few minutes and then bottled), be employed to thoroughly clear the bird. When about to use this solution, shake the bottle well, pour a little into a saucer and anoint the underneath side of the feathers. Do not put it on thickly, but see that just a little is applied all over the underside of the feathers, commencing at the head and finishing at the tail. It would be a great mistake to apply this solution to an exhibition specimen that had just moulted, or even to one partially moulted, as the paraffin is liable to spoil the plumage for some time, but if applied previous to the moult great benefit will be derived.

During the moult, dust, if necessary, with insect powder, and on bright, warm days mix three times a week a teaspoonful of flour of sulphur to every three birds, and on alternate days give (white birds excepted) as much saccharated carbonate of iron as will lie on a sixpence to each bird. Keep them, if possible, in rather a dark place. We do not mean a *really* dark place, but one where no strong light can enter. About a teaspoonful of well boiled linseed should be mixed with the soft food of each bird daily during this period, and twice a week add a very little ammonia to the drinking water.

Treated under such conditions from the commencement of the moult to the finish, we guarantee that any black or coloured bird will be vastly improved in the colour and glossiness of its plumage; so, also, will a white fowl, with the one exception that saccharated carbonate of iron should not be given in this case. If a fowl has been attended to as advised under this heading, and is not suffering from disease, in ninety nine cases out of every hundred that fowl will make a good and rapid moult. Nevertheless there may be some who have not adopted these or similar methods, and find that they have a few that will—no matter what they do to them—"hang" in the moult, and yet they are most anxious that these birds should be fit as soon as possible for exhibition. Under such circumstances, if the bird is removed from a cool run into a warm abode—such as an enclosed shed with a corrugated iron roof during the warm weather—for a few weeks, or removed from such into a cool run, the change of temperature will frequently cause a moult. The liberal feeding with hemp and sunflower seeds also very materially promotes the casting of feathers. But each of these methods is an unnatural forcing of the system, and, unless other means fail, we cannot recommend them for *general* use. We feel sure it is far better to strengthen the system, and thus promote the natural growth of new feathers, than it is to overheat the body or permit violent atmospheric changes to cause the old feathers to be thus shed, and consider that, if the time for moulting has arrived the giving daily of a teaspoonful of cod liver oil and ten drops of colchicum wine mixed with it, together with the assistance of a little meat, will—if the sexes are separated—rarely prove ineffectual.

Colour Feeding.

Is it possible to feed poultry so that the colour of their plumage may be materially improved? We have no doubt that the poultry Fancy is in this respect much behind cage bird members. For years numerous foods have been sold, and undoubtedly answer the purpose, which permit of a given Canary being turned out eventually as a bright yellow or of an orange colour, or even almost red. But the same scientific knowledge that has been brought to bear in the case of cage birds is considerably wanting in that of poultry. Not but what we are inclined to think there are some who have acquired that knowledge, as otherwise how is it possible that buff Cochins or Pekin ducks bought off So and so, and kept according to the methods that the

vendor states they have been accustomed to, moult out into entirely different birds altogether? We are convinced that in certain hands a bird that previously has not been worth more than a pound is often made into a tiptop specimen by the different method employed in feeding, whereby the colour of the plumage is considerably altered. But those who possess this knowledge keep it to themselves, and we never yet came across a poultry exhibitor who would admit that he ever colour fed. Nevertheless we have made a number of experiments in this direction, because we feel sure that several breeds of poultry are losing favour with the Fancy for the simple reason that Mrs., Miss, or Mr. X. Y. Z. always wins, and outsiders stand no chance. Yet, if one carefully overhauls their exhibits, what do you find? Is it always that in shape, in quality of feather, in comb and head points, and suchlike that these exhibits excel your own or others that you know of? We venture to say that frequently will it be found that you know of certain birds as good, if not excelling, in every point, bar evenness and richness of plumage; and, further, that if you purchased these very exhibits they would, when moulted afresh, be quite outclassed by the above exhibitors' remaining birds; and although we know that birds have at times been dyed—the bird being placed bodily into a bath of dye, and thoroughly washed from head to tail—yet we have too good an opinion of fanciers in general to think that such methods are at all common, and that the remarkable evenness and depth of colour is attained by the knowledge and skill of the breeder in feeding on certain foods and chemicals. As we have previously inferred, there is a great deal connected with this subject which is by no means general property in the Fancy, and we fully admit that, as far as we personally are concerned, much remains unknown. Still, by giving the results of certain experiments that we have made, it may be the means of assisting others to solve the mystery. Firstly, it is generally known that maize should never be given to white fowls, or birds that have much white in their plumage; as, for instance, a light Brahma, because such food has a great tendency to turn the white feathers yellow in colour. It therefore naturally follows that any bird we desire to be of a yellow colour cannot be liberally fed on a more suitable food. Maize we consider also greatly improves the legs of a yellow legged bird, but it cannot be given for this purpose without affecting also the colour of the plumage, and if used indiscriminately to all yellow legged breeds would simply result in failure. The feeding of a brown Leghorn with a good proportion of maize we have found beneficial, both as regards legs and plumage, but the same method adopted with a Plymouth Rock, although benefiting the legs, is liable to turn the hackles yellow.

We have experimented with Silk's "red feed" for Canaries on both Pekin ducks and buff Cochins with considerable success, especially as regards the latter, giving a much greater depth of colour, and, if properly and regularly administered, wonderful evenness.

But the most suitable chemical for use amongst all coloured breeds, except in the case of buff or yellow varieties, though even here it is beneficial, that we have come across is saccharated carbonate of iron, which appears to have the property of forcing into the feathers whatever colouring properties the bird has in its body, and which are deposited in cells specially to contain them.

Now in administering anything like the above the great thing to bear in mind is that it is useless to give either of them with the desired object of colouring the plumage unless the bird is moulting. The only means of affecting the colour of the plumage is to permeate the system with certain colouring matter at the time when new feathers are forming and growing, in this way particles of colouring matter are conveyed in small blood globules into the feather, and these pigments remain after the blood in the feathers is dried up, always providing—and this is where so many make a mistake—that the system of colour feeding is continued till the entire growth of all feathers is stopped.

As we just now remarked, saccharated carbonate of iron seems to possess the property of intensifying the colour of any bird, and it may be as well to consider what actually causes the feathers to become coloured. It cannot be entirely owing to the food that they consume, because out of a dozen birds all fed exactly alike, some will stand out as being far more highly coloured than the rest. There must be a certain natural organisation which admits of the bird collecting the colouring matter from its system, and power to deposit it in the pigment cells, which organisation is far more developed in some birds than in others, and, further, it seems to

us possible that this power of collecting and depositing colouring matter may be more or less dormant in certain birds, and that the giving of some substance may revive this latent power, and this is exactly what we believe does happen by the giving of saccharated carbonate of iron.

If this theory be correct—we only put it forward from practical experience, and not from a scientist's point of view—then it follows that if we administer saccharated carbonate of iron, as recommended under the heading of moulting, so as to bring these collecting and depositing functions into play, and on the top of this add foods or drugs rich in colouring matter, that we are then giving the bird a double chance to moult out as we desire.

Two other points are worth consideration in reference to this subject. A rapid moult always means that that particular bird will come out a splendid colour for that bird; clearly proving that a thoroughly healthy bird, one that is easily able to stand the strain on its system of moulting, is in a much better position in this respect, than one that is more or less unhealthy and "hangs" in the moult, or in other words, proving that if the whole of the bird's functions, including those for the collection and depositing of colouring matter, be healthy and active, that then are the best results obtained.

The remaining point is in reference to those birds that are the best able to assimilate and distribute colouring matter. As we previously said, all birds are not alike in this respect. The power to do so in some is far greater than in others. But this peculiarity, like any other, could undoubtedly be increased by the careful selection of the fittest for breeding purposes. We are referring here, not to the naturally good coloured birds, but to those which artificially treated are the best for the purpose, because if you take two naturally coloured birds, one a good colour and the other only medium, it by no means follows that the good coloured bird will be the best at the end of the special feeding.

We cannot conclude this subject of colour feeding without making a few remarks from the utilitarian's point of view. From the experiments that we have made, we have found little, if any, ill effects arise, the birds' constitutions appearing not undermined in the slightest. At the same time, we can easily perceive how colour feeding might be carried to excess, and that not only would the life of the actual colour fed specimen be materially shortened, but that the offspring of a bird whose constitution had been more or less ruined by an overabundance of some deleterious drug or excessive quantities of cayenne pepper would be puny, weakly ne'er do weels.

Maintaining Colour in the Legs.

Disappointment is frequently caused by an otherwise good exhibition specimen losing the greater portion of its leg colouring. Black legs become a slaty or grey colour, and yellow legs lose so much of their former brightness as to appear almost white.

Birds kept on a very chalky ground, or where lime has been strewn for disinfecting purposes, suffer the most, but even where such is not found, if the birds are kept on dry ground, sooner or later the leg colour will more or less disappear.

It appears necessary that in order to properly maintain the colour on the legs moisture is absolutely indispensable.

Rarely will the fowls' legs look brighter and in better condition than when the birds have been able to run out in the early morning into longish grass, and their legs thus becoming thoroughly saturated with the dew that has arisen and fallen on the ground. Such natural methods are, however, not within the reach of many fanciers, and others, which if more tedious, are but little less effective, have to be resorted to.

Some fanciers strew the whole of their fowls' run thickly with peat moss, and moisten it well with rain water, every day taking a gardener's watering can and rose and resprinkling the same; the soft food being placed in a wooden trough on the top of a good sized piece of boarding, so that any that falls out of the trough is not covered by the loose fragments of the peat moss, which would be liable to cause crop binding if consumed. The hard corn is, on the contrary, well scattered amongst the moss litter and the birds in scratching for it get their legs thoroughly moistened.

This method answers the purpose, as far as the colour of the legs are concerned admirably. But it is only natural that fowls which never have a really dry spot to stand on during the day time should be liable to roup and cramp, which birds

kept under such conditions undoubtedly are. A better plan, we consider, is to have a portion only of the run thus covered, and divided off from the remainder, and then shut the birds up in the damp portion during an hour or so when feeding on hard corn.

Another method, which we first saw advocated by a correspondent to *The Feathered World*, we have also proved beneficial in maintaining the colour of the legs. The plan he adopted was to take a good sized cooking pan and fill it with rain water, and place it in such a position that the birds are bound to step into it as they come from or enter the house. The water, however, should be changed as often as possible, using, whenever you can, fresh fallen rain water.

But besides these what we might term more or less self applying methods, others equally advantageous and less likely to injure the health of the stock may be adopted. The regular rubbing into the legs of paraffin, sweet oil, vaseline, unsalted lard or butter will one and all keep the legs of a bright and sound colour. The greatest drawback to the employment of these latter preventatives is, that if the birds have dry loose earth to scratch in, or are allowed a dust bath, instead of being given a dressing when necessary for the destruction of insects, they get their legs smothered with dirt, which, if not washed away thoroughly previous to the next application, is liable to get under the scales and collect to such an extent that it becomes exceedingly difficult eventually to remove. If, however, the bird is kept on ground very hard and smooth, and the place is swept clean and no dust bath allowed, these latter remedies will be found most beneficial.

Although we have mentioned a number of ways and means by which the leg colouring may be improved or maintained, we have yet to mention that which in our opinion is the most important point connected with this subject. We remember some years ago attending a certain show, and purchasing for a very little money a rare coloured and altogether grand brown Leghorn cock, with the exception of its legs, which, if they were not actually white, were near enough to it for everyone to call them so. Within a week we sent that same bird to another show and secured first and special, beating the first and second winners of the former exhibition.

Not one in twenty—we think we might almost say, not one in a hundred—fanciers seem to know that a fowl sheds the scales on its legs at the same time that it sheds the feathers on its body, or, anyhow, that it should do so, though very often it requires assistance.

When a fowl has finished moulting, if its legs are not a good colour, carefully examine them, and make sure that the old scales are properly shed. If they are not, get someone to hold the bird, and press your thumb nails against the sides of a scale, and it will drop off, leaving probably a bright good coloured scale underneath. In like manner work down the whole leg, and, perhaps, it may even be necessary to follow suit with the toes. Then having finished one leg, compare it with the other, and you will often be astounded with the result.

Preserving Foot Feathers.

In feathered legged breeds, such as Brahmas, Cochins, Pekin Bantams, etc., well preserved foot feathers is a desideratum in the show pen. An experienced judge would certainly take into consideration the number of broken quills remaining in the foot of any bird; still, the fact that they are broken, and that another bird's foot feathers are intact, cannot but prejudice the chance of the former winning.

Various methods have been advocated to prevent the feathers getting broken, and some, to our mind, most extraordinary ones. Only lately we read in a recent publication that the author advised, having this object in view, that "their pens must be littered thickly to prevent breakage." We cannot conceive any plan the adoption of which would be likely to prove more fatal to the foot feathers than the following of this advice, which, needless to say, was not written by a Brahma or Cochin fancier. The chief cause of a bird breaking its foot feathers is from the habit it has of scratching, and if the pens are well littered, what greater incentive can be given to the bird to indulge in its favourite occupation?

There are only two ways that we know of by which the foot feathers may be preserved, and with both of which we have been thoroughly successful. The first is to keep the birds on short grass. The ground should be quite level, or, anyhow, there should not be any unevenness of the surface; in fact, it should resemble a well kept lawn. Do not allow the bird or birds to remain too long in one spot, as by continued walking over, and by the plucking of the grass, bare places are liable

to appear, and the fowls soon commence to scratch the ground. Small houses and short wire runs, with a roof on top, sufficient for a cockerel or a couple of hens, and which can daily easily be shifted on to fresh ground, are the best and handiest things for this purpose.

But, then everyone hasn't got a well kept lawn, or if they have one, are not inclined to have their poultry and tennis served up together; so that in the majority of cases the second plan will be found most convenient. Allow no grass run at all, but dig up the earth at the bottom of the house, and also in the covered run, and mix a certain proportion of cement with it. If the earth is dry, moisten it well after having mixed in the cement. Now take a good heavy rammer and beat the earth down as hard as possible, making the whole perfectly smooth. Allow no dust bath, but when necessary give the birds a dusting with insect powder. With a broom daily sweep out the pens. Of course it goes without saying that the fowls should be supplied with a box of grit, and that fresh green food be daily hung up in their pens.

It is advisable to examine the foot well during moulting, for at times old broken quills hang on for a very long while before falling out, and sometimes prevent new feathers from growing, and these should be extracted. Nevertheless, it sometimes happens that these old quills are more of an advantage than otherwise, by their assistance in keeping the feathers well spread out, so that, perforce, we must leave this matter to the discretion of the individual breeder.

As regards the roosting of such breeds now under discussion, we do not consider it nearly of so much importance, as suitable accommodation during the day time. By this we mean, that whether the birds are allowed to roost on perches, on a flat shelf, or are confined to the ground, the advantages of either system are but slight. We have maintained the foot feathers in Brahmas and Cochins quite as long when we have allowed them to go to roost on a perch as when we have restricted them to a shelf or the ground. But if a perch be used, it should be a good broad one, say 3½ inches, and not placed *more* than a foot from the ground. If a shelf be used, some clean straw should be placed on top, which has been well rubbed so as to make it nice and soft, and every morning it should be cleaned from any foulness and all droppings removed, and if the fowls are inclined to go to it in the day time for the purpose of scratching in it, it should be carried away until evening. These remarks apply also in the case of the birds sleeping on the ground, only here, of course, the straw must each day be removed until the time arrives for the birds to go to roost.

Before the moulting season arrives and the new feathers are commencing to shoot, endeavour to get the feet and shanks as clear as possible from that complaint known as "scaly legs." The working in of paraffin is perhaps about the best remedy to employ in the case of yellow or white legged varieties. Use the paraffin daily, and once or twice a week soak the legs in warm water, and rub with a tooth brush, but not hard enough to make the leg bleed. We know it is a difficult matter with these heavily feathered varieties to always make a thoroughly satisfactory job of it. But with perseverance in this way a very great assistance can be afforded in the promotion of a greater abundance of new feathers.

Stained Lobes.

Fowls that should have white lobes, frequently get them streaked with red, and those that should have red lobes often get spots or blotches of white in them; both are detrimental from a show point of view.

In the case of a should-be white lobe becoming more or less red, the bird should at once be caught up as soon as the first signs of such are observed. Place the fowl in some warm abode—by the term "warm" we mean free from draughts—and do not let in too much light. Wash the lobes daily in warm milk, and dry thoroughly, then apply powdered zinc. It is most important that the drying of the lobes is done properly, as otherwise the zinc is apt to blister them.

With regard to a red lobed bird turning white, a totally different course must be pursued. Place the bird in a well ventilated house, and, if possible, by himself; let his run be an exposed one, and where he can get plenty of exercise. Bury his corn, so that he has—as the saying goes—to work for his living. A little underdone meat should be daily given him, and also ten drops of colchicum wine in a teaspoonful of water. The above remedies we have found most successful scores of times, but naturally they do not answer in the case of fowls that always possessed

thoroughly bad lobes; but if a bird has a fairly good white lobe, with just a few red spots in it, or if an old bird had originally a good white lobe, but is starting getting it "blushed," or if a naturally red lobed bird is beginning to pale in the lobe, then the methods advocated will in the majority of cases prove effective.

Comb Over.

For many years it has been the commonly accepted theory in the Fancy that nothing tended to make a heavy combed cockerel's comb fall over sooner than the feeding the bird on much meat, and, therefore, meat should on no account be given to a bird whose comb had a tendency to fall over. We admit that the first part of this idea is correct, but the latter portion is altogether wrong. It entirely depends upon the *cause* of the comb's inclination to droop. We have previously shown that in early chickenhood the weight and heat of the hen's body are very liable to cause this result, and, also that when the chickens are older—say four or five months old—that if they crowd together at night time or if the house is badly ventilated the same defect will occur. Further, if cockerels are kept in a covered in run with a low roof and without a free current of air passing through, the heat from the roof in the summer time will produce a like result. Now in each of these cases just named it means that through unnatural forcing a portion of the fowl's body—to wit, the comb—has overgrown its strength, and that nourishing stimulants, such as underdone meat and cod liver oil, are just the very things to enable it to pick up again.

Even in the case where a bird's comb was falling over through being too highly stimulated—for the giving of too much meat or condiments is very liable to have this effect—we would still not advocate the entire suppression of meat, but rather a gradual decreasing of this, and a corresponding increase of cod liver oil. But when the comb falls from the effects of too stimulating feeding, we have the worst kind of "comb over" to treat with. In the other cases named, by separating the bird from the others and the placing of him in a well ventilated house, and daily administering a teaspoonful of cod liver oil and a little underdone meat, he will, if a young bird and healthy, quickly recover. But not so with an over stimulated bird, here considerable time is required to effect a cure, and if the comb is fully grown out before it falls over, a permanent cure is often impossible. One of the first things to do in such a case, in fact it is advisable in any case of weak comb, is to place the comb in a cage, so that it be maintained in an upright position. This can be made by taking a piece of copper wire; make a bend in the middle which will nicely fit into the stem of the bird's comb at the base. Then bend the wires so that they follow the curve of the head from the back to the beak. Now take each wire and bend them upwards and backwards, leaving the curve in the wire extending just in front of the comb at the base, and let the ends of the wire be bent in such a direction that they can properly support the comb. Fasten the wires together by a piece of fine string at the front of the comb, and also at the ends of the wire above the comb. Some birds take to the "cage" wonderfully well, whereas others are continually trying to scratch it off. When such happens, we have found the best plan is to join the legs together by a short piece of coarse soft string or tape, long enough to enable the bird to walk, but not to raise his foot.

Since penning the above lines, we have received a sample of Messrs. Willis Bros. new appliance for "comb over." Although we have had no time to practically test this new invention, still, the idea is so well conceived and practically carried out, whereby not only is the comb assisted to maintain its upright position, but, also, by a very simple arrangement the removal of "thumb marks" becomes by no means impossible, and it is therefore with considerable confidence that we recommend every breeder to have at least one of these cages in hand, ready for any emergency that may arise. Their cost is well within the reach of all, being only eightpence each. Full directions as to the fixing on are supplied with each order.

We have also received a somewhat similar appliance from Mr. A. Goddard which is deserving of considerable praise for the ingenuity displayed; and as both of these cages differ in construction the breeder cannot do better than provide himself with at least one of each, so that if one be not suitable for a certain comb the other undoubtedly would be. The price is similar to the former—viz., eightpence each.

Assisting the Growth of Combs and Lobes.

To the intelligent reader who has followed our remarks on the ill effects that

arise from heat as regards a cockerel's comb It will appear obvious that one of the greatest essentials to the promotion of growth in the pullet's comb is the very thing that is injurious with the opposite sex.

A wonderful thing is heat if judiciously applied. It promotes the growth of rabbits' ears, and a rabbit moulted in a heated room or shed will have much longer fur than one reared in an outside hutch, and the same effect is produced in a fowl. If a Game fowl be moulted in a heated house and allowed to remain there for some time it will never handle as a "hard feathered bird," whereas a Cochin or a Brahma is considerably improved by such a system being adopted, anyhow at least from an exhibition point of view.

In the same way that warmth increases the rabbits' ears, so also does it the comb, wattles, and lobes of the bird.

If you can place your pullets for a time in an atmosphere varying from 60 to 70 degrees their combs will be increased considerably. The time to place them under this treatment is as soon as the combs begin to change colour, and frequently in two or three weeks will they have grown large, fully developed combs.

Again, we must refer to lop rabbit keepers. It is a common practice with these fanciers to work the ears of the rabbit between the fingers and thumb, working from the base of the ear towards the point. The same method is also beneficial when applied to the case of a pullet's comb. Take a little vaseline, dip your thumb and finger into this, and work the comb from the base to the serrations. This should be done every day or every other day. A liberal supply of meat should also be allowed the birds.

The washing of the lobes in warm water, drying, and then, after applying a little glycerine carefully working them out in a somewhat similar way to the comb, will very greatly increase their growth also.

Now, there is no necessity to go to any very great expense in order to obtain the requisite heat, any unused room, or a fairly well built shed, will answer the purpose admirably. The birds can be placed in tiers, either in exhibition pens or improvised ones that will answer the same purpose, and there are several heating apparatus sold for small conservatories at the cost of a pound or thirty shillings that will give excellent results. Or, if the weather happens to be nice and warm at the time that the pullets are fit for preparation, the placing of them in low roofed covered runs—especially if the roof be corrugated iron—will answer the same purpose.

When combs are thus forced, considerable care is necessary in the after treatment of such birds. Have you never bought a Minorca pullet at a show that possessed a grand comb, and which comb, after you have had the bird home for a short while, began to shrivel up and utterly spoil the bird for exhibition? If you have not, many others have, and it is simply owing to want of proper treatment. They must be treated in the same way as plants raised in a hothouse, and be gradually hardened off before being placed in a cool run. When the combs are fully grown out in any particular birds, place them in a fairly warm house, but unheated. After a few days they may be put outside during the daytime into an open run, but not if the weather is very cold. By thus gradually accustoming the bird to the changed condition of temperature no ill effects will arise.

The same kind of careful treatment should also be followed when a pullet arrives from a show with her comb much increased in size since she left home, the warmth of the show having had exactly the same effect as if the bird had been placed in a heated room at home.

Dubbing Game and Game Bantams.

Although it is not our province here to enter into the discussion that for some time has been carried on in the Fancy Press as to the cruelty or otherwise of this practice, still we think a few remarks may not be inappropriate. That the bird *does* suffer during the operation cannot conscientiously be denied, and, without going into details, we consider the principal reasons that the advocates of this system advance—viz., that the bird is not so liable to get injured when fighting, and that if the comb and wattles are removed these cannot become frostbitten, are somewhat lame excuses. On the other hand, the anti dubbers, to our mind, greatly over estimate the amount of suffering involved. To assert, as some of these gentlemen do, that the comb is by far the most sensitive part of a fowl is to imply that the remainder of its body has next to no feeling at all in it. What poultry keeper of even only a few years' standing has not seen a cock bird quietly standing

in the middle of its pen with the hens surrounding him and plucking his comb, so much so that the blood literally streams down his neck and falls on to the ground, without the slightest symptoms on the cock's part that this is painful or even disagreeable to him? We could quote many other instances to prove that the dubbing of a cock's comb is not nearly such an awful act of cruelty as some would have us believe. Nevertheless, we may be numbered amoog the strong anti-dubbers for this reason, that we believe great injury is done to the popularity of the breed from the practice of dubbing. A skilled dubber can always *make* a bird much better than an unskilled one, and many a would-be Game fancier takes as his choice another variety simply for this very reason. We believe that if it were made a rule that all Game or Game Bantams were to be shown undubbed, that these varieties would go up by leaps and bounds in the popularity of fanciers. The usual time for dubbing cockerels is from four to six months, Bantams generally requiring to be a good six months. But before describing the means to be employed in this operation, we strongly advise, for the sake of preventing unnecessary suffering, that the novice should take his first few birds to an expert and assist him in the operation before attempting it on his own account.

Obtain a sharp pair of scissors, slightly curved scissors are sold specially for this purpose, and get an assistant to hold the bird. The latter holding the bird firmly against his body with one hand and the comb in the other, the operator should now take hold of the loose skin of the ear lobe, insert the point of his scissors, and dissect the outer portion, leaving no loose skin behind. Having done this on both sides, the wattles should next receive attention. Take each one single, and cut close to the face skin; do not, however, cut into the latter, nor into the skin of the throat, and, lastly, take the comb off. This is best performed by commencing at the back and cutting towards the beak. Press the scissors firmly down on the head, following the curve of the head and removing the comb as close as possible to the head. If this is done correctly but little else will be necessary, except perhaps to give a couple of snips each side of the front to remove any slight excrescences that may still remain.

Many people after this operation is performed simply place the bird down without anything else being done to it. But we think a better plan is to hold the bird's head under a tap of cold water for a few seconds, and with a dry, soft cloth wipe it a little, and in the evening apply a little vaseline. This latter will enable the scabs that form to fall off much sooner than would have been the case if nothing had been applied to it. White lobed pullets should also be treated similarly to the cockerels, that is, as far as their lobes are concerned.

Reddening of the Face and Comb.

Owing not always from actual ill health, but frequently from a fowl being too closely confined, or from being kept in a rather dark place, the comb and face become somewhat pale. A little meat given under such circumstances is very beneficial, but if in addition ten drops of colchicum wine be daily administered in a teaspoonful of water, and the bird be not suffering from any disease, the desired effect will be very shortly produced.

The final preparations of the face and comb we deal with under the heading of "Final Preparation."

Age at Which to Show.

Different breeds vary in the time that is necessary to elapse before they are fit to show, but it may be taken as a rule that a pullet never looks better than she does just previous to laying and a cockerel when he has just obtained his full adult tail. In light breeds, such as Minorcas, Leghorns, etc., this will usually be when the pullets are five to six months old and the cockerels six to seven months, and with heavy breeds, such as Brahmas and Cochins, from six to seven months in the case of pullets and from seven to nine months for the cockerels. These remarks must not be taken to imply that in both sexes they do not improve with age, because, as almost every exhibitor knows, in several breeds a young bird stands a very poor chance against older ones, but that as young birds they are about at their prime at the times mentioned.

Selecting Show Specimens.

A few days previous to the show at which you intend to exhibit place several

of your birds that you have to select from, and which have been previously trained, into exhibition pens, and carefully go through them, dotting down the good and bad points of each specimen, and finally allotting to each bird his share of marks, according to the standard issued. With many breedere this is of course not necessary, but by the novice adopting such a plan he is least liable to make the mistake of sending an inferior specimen to those that he has retained.

Training for the Show Pen.

Of no slight importance is the matter of training a bird to hold itself well in the show pen. Judges at most shows have no time to waste—ten minutes, or so, in front a bird—in order to induce it to hold itself properly; and so frequently as bird goes down in the list simply because the exhibitor has not taken a little trouble to teach it how to comport itself.

The first great essential to good training is to get your birds as tame as possible. The fowl that will, whilst still in its run, come up and eat food out of your hand will not be half the bother to train that a wilder one will; and this is why frequently artificially reared chickens are much better subjects to teach than those reared under a hen.

It is a good plan to have some exhibition pens erected in two different places, some being placed in a narrow shed, the roof of which only extends a few feet beyond the pens, and let the shed be entirely open in the front, and facing a certain spot where you or others will be continually passing by close to the pens. In this way the birds will quickly become accustomed to anyone passing to and fro, and, when opportunity permits, stop in front and give them a little piece of meat or some other bit bit. Do not overfeed by any means; it is far more desirable to keep them rather short of food till they have become fairly tamed, when the real training should take place, they being removed to similar pens entirely under cover, or the training may be continued where they are, provided the shed is convenient for that purpose and the weather is not too cold to hamper your movements.

Open the door of the pen and gently stroke the bird with one hand; probably he will resent such treatment, but perseverance will do wonders. Still, there are some birds that it becomes necessary to instil into their minds at starting that it is we, and not they, that are going to be masters. If a particular bird will not let you stroke him, quietly, but firmly, seize him across the body with both hands and hold him up for a second or so with his legs dangling in the air. Then place him down in the front of the pen, and as soon as he attempts to shift lift him up again, and continue in this way until finally you are at length able to gently stroke him under the throat, and to quietly withdraw your hands from the pen before he has again attempted to move away. This will be quite sufficient training for the first time.

The next time you go to him, which may be later in the same day, or, if the first lesson was given him in the afternoon, the next morning will be soon enough, very likely you will not have to lift him up more than once or twice, and perhaps not at all, but can work him towards the front of the pen and gently tickle him on the throat with one hand and with the other work his tail into the correct style of carriage. Having done this, let your hands remain quietly at the bottom of the pen and see how long he will stay in this position. As soon as he moves, however, again stroke him and coax him into the correct position. In the case of a Brahma, Cochin, Orpington, etc., the tickling of the throat with one hand and doing the same at the stern with the other, will at the same time as making the bird hold itself up, also induce it to display to advantage its cushion.

With a Game or Game Bantam the feeding it from the top of the pen with little pieces of meat will induce him to show his "reach" better. But even in this case we should never altogether forego the handling and the kind of mesmeric influence induced by the stroking of his throat.

Always keep the bird whilst training him near to the front of the pen, with his head facing you. When you have succeeded in putting him through his paces easily with the hands, then take a small light stick, and, whilst keeping your hands in the pen as before, endeavour to get him to act in the same manner by touching him with the stick instead of with the hand. Having accomplished this, in a short time a longer cane can be worked from the outside, until eventually, by just inserting

the cane through the bars and touching him up, he will immediately throw himself into a good exhibition posture.

Never lose your patience. As we previously said, certain birds require firm dealing with, but never holloa at the bird (as we have heard some do) or in any way frighten him, and whilst you are actually engaged in putting him through his paces it is best to be entirely alone with him, as anyone else moving about or speaking is apt to draw his attention away from what you are endeavouring to instil into him, but by gentle coaxing, kind, if firm, treatment, and the giving of small choice morsels to eat, you will soon gain his confidence and be able to do pretty well what you like with him.

Management of Show Ducks.

No show specimens of ducks are improved by being allowed to run free after they have moulted. The sun will dull the colour of coloured ducks, take the colour out of a Pekin, and tan the bills. Frequent swimming in the water is also detrimental to coloured ducks.

Birds intended for show should be kept away from strong light and only allowed an occasional bath. Their sleeping accommodation should be well littered with clean straw, shaken up daily, and renewed as often as necessary. Let there always be a plentiful supply of water in a good size pan or trough, boarded over on the top, merely leaving sufficient room for the birds to get their heads in and drink. Provide grit and cinders, and give a daily supply of chopped green food, or, failing this, swedes or mangolds.

Should an Aylesbury's beak have become tanned by accident, fine emery paper will remove the stain, but by the use of plenty of sharp sand and fine grit in the drinking trough, and the placing and burying in same some hard corn daily, and the keeping them out of the sun in hot weather will do all that is necessary in this respect.

It is almost as important to train ducks for the show pen as is the case with fowls, and this important item should not be neglected; as a wild duck is considerably worse to judge than a wild fowl.

Washing Fowls.

"Always rub down the way the feathers lie, never against the webbing." Such were the only, or, anyhow, the chief, instructions we had on this subject for many years. Many a time have we struggled with two or three Brahmas or Cochins from about two p.m. to twelve and after at midnight, only next morning to find that in many places the feathers would not web out properly, and that even after the second or third day the birds would be termed by many "badly washed." Everyone we spoke to on the matter told us that we hadn't properly rinsed the soap out, till at last we felt this must be the case, and the next bird we performed on was rinsed in four different lots of water after being removed from the soapy bath. Still the result was much the same next morning. We then requisitioned the aid of a friend to work the pump whilst we held the bird underneath. This he did for the space of ten minutes, drenching both the bird and ourselves through to the skin. We both survived, but there was little else of encouragement worth mentioning. Repeated failures only made us the more anxious to learn the correct way to do it, and eventually a chance occurring to purchase a stud of white Cochins, we stipulated that the vendor should give us a lesson in washing. This he did, and it was thus that we obtained our first insight of the proper method to be employed.

Before starting to wash a fowl, always see that the necessary appliances are in order and ready to hand. These consist of three large zinc washing baths (the larger the better), a copper full of hot rain water, three or four good sized soft towels, a cup (or a tin mug is not so liable to get broken), a bright fire, a contrivance for placing the birds into to dry, which may consist of an ordinary exhibition hamper with the lining removed from the front, or a light wooden frame, covered at the top, sides, and back, and divided into partitions to prevent cocks from fighting, can be built specially for the purpose. Having arranged these in order, and well littered the floor of the drying accommodation with clean straw, and obtained sole possession of the kitchen for the time being, a start can safely be made.

Take a certain amount, according to the number of birds to be washed, of Sunlight or Spratts' poultry soap, cut it up into thin slices and place it into a vessel of water over the fire until it has boiled up and dissolved.

Fill two of the baths about half full of warm water; the water should not be too

hot, but so that one can comfortably hold one's hand in it, say 110 degrees of heat. Fill the remaining bath about half full of cold water, and mix a *little* blue in it.

Now take the bird and dip him into one of the baths with warm water, pressing his body underneath the water so as to well soak the outside feathers, then whilst parting the feathers—pulling them back so that the bird's flesh is visible—with one hand, take the mug or cup in the other and dip it into the water and pour into the feathers. Perform a similar operation all over the back, neck, and upper parts of the bird, and with that portion of its body that is underneath the water separate the feathers with your fingers, so that the water can get well into the roots of the feathers and thoroughly wet the fluff. You might hold a bird's body for some minutes under water, and yet when you took him out find that the under portion of his feathers in many parts were not wet at all. And this is one of the great secrets of a successful wash, viz., thoroughly wetting the feathers all over before applying any soap.

If the lather is now ready—there should be no lumps left in it—the bird may be lifted out for a second and the lather emptied into the bath. Or, and this is the plan that we ourselves prefer, prepare the lather so that at the time you wish to use it it is cool enough to dip one's hand into it. Take a little in the hand and rub it on the feathers.

Now, when washing a bird disabuse your mind of the idea that you are handling something that is brittle and liable to break. When once the feathers are thoroughly soaked with water you may treat them in the same way as you would a piece of flannel, rubbing them backwards and forwards, and completely getting every atom of dirt washed out.

Take the head first and place it between both hands, and rub your hands backwards and forwards as if you were washing a ball. Do the same with the neck, continually supplying a little more lather as occasion requires. Then take the back, this is best done by supplying the lather with one hand, when necessary, and rubbing the feathers backwards and forwards with the other. As we said before, don't be frightened about breaking them, they will stand a lot of such treatment, and often require it. The wings can next be taken in hand ; these are best washed by placing one hand underneath the feathers, and rubbing well with the other, and the tail should also be similarly washed. The upper part of the breast can be done by one hand only.

Having gone so far, get an assistant to hold the bird up, by seizing a wing and thigh in each hand, and slightly turning the bird over so that its breast is facing the operator. The latter can then take some lather in one hand and rub up and down the sides of the breast bone. Let the assistant then take hold of each wing only, and the operator by placing one hand under some of the feathers at the stern or sides, and rubbing some lather with the other, can remove all dirt from this quarter. Finally, let the assistant hold the bird by seizing a wing and thigh in one hand, and the remaining wing in the other, leaving one leg at liberty. This the operator can easily get clean by the rubbing with one or both hands.

Before proceeding further, we will just mention that at times a bird often gets very dirty in its foot feathers or at the tips of its wings. Should such happen, it is best to clean these parts first of all. Soak the feet or ends of the wings in warm water, getting the feathers well wetted. Dip a nail brush into the lather, and, whilst the bird's wing or foot is being held firmly and flat on a table, scrub the feathers well until quite clean.

Having removed every particle of dirt, rinse out as much soap as possible ; let your assistant then hold the bird up by its wings, and then squeeze out as much of the soapy water as possible. Then plunge the bird into the clear warm water and go through a very similar performance to that which you have completed, the only difference being that this time you use no soap. But the act of rubbing the feathers in the same kind of way, and the continual pouring on of clean water during your progress, will effectively remove all traces of soap, which, if allowed to remain, will not permit the feathers to web out properly.

Whilst thus engaged, let your assistant pour in a little warm water into the third bath, where a little blue has been placed, just sufficient to take off the chill, and having thoroughly rinsed the bird squeeze its feathers in a similar way as before, and place it into the remaining bath. Again let the water get well into the feathers, and then, whilst he is being held up, take hold of handfuls of feathers and squeeze

out as much moisture as possible, especially squeezing the breast, fluff, tail, and thigh feathers.

Now place him on a perfectly clean table, and, taking one of the clean soft towels previously mentioned in both hands, rub his head and neck in the same way as you did when washing; in fact, the whole body may be treated in a similar manner. By the time you have gone over him once, or perhaps before if he be a big Brahma or Cochin, your towel will be ringing wet, and a second or third towel becomes necessary before his feathers appear fairly dry. When, however, they are, he should be placed in the drying cage in front of the fire. But should he appear a bit off colour from the operation, a teaspoonful of brandy and water or port wine should be administered; in fact, in any case, this treatment will do no harm, and often good. Having got him safely ensconced in front of the fire, one's labour is by no means finished. The fire should be bright and warm, but care must be taken that he be not placed close enough to blister his face or lobes, or to too quickly dry the feathers in any one particular spot, as, in that case, they are liable to become twisted. The bird should be continually shifted round, and, if it be necessary to leave him for a time, an old table cloth should be hung over the front of the cage to protect him.

If they have been well rubbed with the towels, they will very quickly web out again; but if at the time of going to bed still some hens seem rather damp, they had best, if room permit, be placed together in front of the fire, a cloth thrown over them, and the fire made up for the night.

Some people simply place the birds near the fire in open wicker hampers, but we are convinced that by more or less covering the cage up, and thereby stopping too free an escape of the moisture arising from the fowls, that the feathers web out considerably better.

By next morning, if all has gone well, the birds should be dry, and merely requiring a few hours to plume themselves, in order to put on the finishing touches to their toilet, and should now be removed to comfortable quarters well littered with soft, clean straw, and fed. But on mentioning feeding, this reminds us that we always found it best to give no soft food to birds that have been washed the day previous. Frequently are they inclined to be loose, and the giving of soft food aggravates the evil. Neither should much water be allowed during this period.

In case of any mishap, it is always best to wash the birds at least two clear days before the day arrives to dispatch them to the show.

Always use rain water, if possible, for the purpose of washing poultry, or, anyhow, as soft water as you can get, as hard water is not at all suitable.

Some fanciers, instead of using the hand to apply the lather, make a sponge answer this purpose, which is also effective. Others never prepare the latter previously, but simply make it as they proceed by the aid of the sponge. We, however, much prefer the former method, as the soap in this case is easier rinsed out.

To the amateur, or even to the professional, who does not mind a little extra expense, we can strongly recommend the "Feather Beautifier," sold by Mr. W. E. Greeves. We allow that it is (compared to ordinary soap) an expensive item, but what is the object of a sixpence if we can by this extra expenditure exhibit a bird in such a condition after it has been washed that instead of being unnoticed or only vhc'd it carries off the first prize? We ourselves some years ago sold a soap which for washing birds for exhibition was—not only in ours, but other prominent fanciers' opinions—unsurpassed. Still, the sale did not repay us for our trouble and expense, and we have long since given over selling it. But times out of number have we seen birds exhibited, which, had they been washed by this or a similar composition, would have been well in the money instead of being left out in the cold. Although the sale of this soap now under discussion is of no benefit to us in any way, we venture to assert that if the directions which are supplied with the "Feather Beautifier" are carried out, as regards its preparation for use, and our own previous instructions are adopted as to the washing, etc., that the veriest novice will turn out a washed fowl in prime exhibition trim.

Obtaining Gloss.

We have previously mentioned that the best and most suitable time to improve the plumage of a bird is during the period of moult, nevertheless, the mixing of a little well boiled linseed in the soft food two or three times a week, enables a bird to put a good gloss on its plumage, inasmuch as the oil gland is thus well supplied.

and the bird is enabled, by placing his beak amongst the feathers near to the mouth of this organ, which is situated on the back, close to the tail, to distribute it amongst his feathers whilst cleaning them.

Enlivening a Cockerel.

Should a cockerel have been kept entirely away from the hens, or been parted from them for some time previously, the placing of two or three hens in with him for a few days previous to the show, will enliven him considerably, and make him feel, as the saying has it, cock of the walk, and he will thus show himself off to far greater advantage.

Preparing Spanish.

Spanish fowls require special preparation before being exhibited. Great attention should be paid to the preparation of the face and lobes in the manner described for white lobed birds under the heading of "Stained Lobes," the same being frequently washed with milk, and, after thoroughly drying, the applying of powdered zinc should not be forgotten. But besides this, it is the practice of most exhibitors of Spanish that, with the exception of a narrow fringe above the eye and next to the comb, the small hairs should be plucked out from the face and lobe. This is best done by seizing them low down with small tweezers and pulling them out.

Crested Fowls.

During the period of moulting you will observe that all fowls are in the habit of cleaning their feathers from the sheath which covers the webbing whilst the feathers are growing. But it is impossible for the bird to perform this act to its crest, and unless personally taken in hand will often never properly grow a full crest. During such time as the crest is growing daily examine it, and if any of the sheaths of the feathers appear dried up carefully break them away with the thumb nail, and in a short time the webbing will properly expand.

We might here mention that, although not to so great an extent, the same thing sometimes occurs with any fowl's neck hackles and tail feathers, and that by daily drawing these feathers between the fingers and the thumbnail a bird may often be got ready for show several weeks sooner than would otherwise have been the case.

There is another matter that also requires your attention when crested fowls are moulting. At such times as the young quills are growing on the crest, the temptation for others to pluck these out is almost irresistible, and, therefore, if possible, the birds should be kept separate during this period.

The crest should from time to time be examined for insects. There is a tiny little black insect which frequently attacks the crests, and besides injuriously affecting the health of the birds, considerably hampers the proper growth of the feathers. We have at times literally seen millions of these minute insects in the crest of a single Polish.

Wrytails and High Tails.

An otherwise good specimen is sometimes quite spoilt for exhibition purposes by possessing either a wry or a high tail. The former may either occur from breeding or from some mishap when young. For instance, if a hen pecks a chicken at the side of what is commonly called the "parson's nose" so that one or more of the ligaments to this ornamental appendage are snapped asunder, these will contract, and thus pull the tail on to one side. If not left too long without attention, the cutting of the strained ligament on the other side—which can easily be felt by moving the tail with the fingers and thumb—will sometimes effect a cure.

As regards a high tail, the fastening on to it of sufficient lead to make the bird droop his tail rather more than is wanted, and the leaving of this attached to him for a week or two, will often make a wonderful improvement to him, especially if it is a youngish bird. We would, however, warn the novice from being too quick to apply either of these remedies. For often when a bird is growing its tail, and has more feathers on one side than the other, its present tail thus falls more over to the opposite side, but as soon as the other feathers grow the former ones are forced back again into their correct position. So also with a high tailed bird, or an apparently high tailed one, if the bird is only growing its tail there is no cause for alarm, as probably when the full tail is out the weight of the other feathers will keep it down.

Crooked Toes.

Sometimes a good bird has a crooked toe which spoils his chance considerably in the show pen. This is sometimes caused by accident, but more frequently from weakness. We have observed too that artificially hatched chickens are more liable to come with crooked toes than those naturally hatched under hens. Also that travelled eggs are more liable to produce this deformity than those that are laid on the same place at which they are hatched. As regards a cure, take a piece of copper wire, and bend it to the shape of the crooked toe, bind it firmly, though not too tightly, to the toe with worsted, and each day straighten the wire, and consequently the toe, a little more in the desired direction. We feel, however, bound to say that we have never cured a really bad case completely by this method. Another plan is to take a thin piece of hard wood, place this underneath the whole length of the toe, and bind the toe to it in a straightened condition, and this, as a rule, is more successful than the other, but the simple fact of having to bind the toe firmly is by no means conducive to the strengthening of the joints.

Mr. A. Goddard has just forwarded us what appears to be a most ingenious contrivance, and one which we should think will prove a boon to the exhibitor who has a crooked toed bird in his yard. It consists of a wire framework which rests flat upon the ground, each toe having a separate cage, so that it be kept properly spread out and straight. Attached to the wire work is a small leather pad for the ball of the foot to rest in, and joining this is what somewhat resembles a lady's corset, which is laced firmly up the shank of the fowl. These appliances are made —at least, so we presume—in pairs, one for the right and the other for the left foot. We should advise a couple of these being kept by every breeder of exhibition stock, so that they may be applied as soon as the tendency to crooked toes be observed, as the longer a bird is allowed to remain before measures are adopted to cure it, the harder will the task become. The price is 1s. 6d. each.

Scaley Legs.

Although this subject is perhaps more adapted to a treatise on diseases than with the matter of preparing poultry for exhibition; still, knowing as we do from experience, how frequently will a good exhibition bird's chance in the show pen be handicapped by this complaint, we think a few words as to the cause and cure may be of some assistance.

The cause of this complaint is a very small insect, which burrows under the scales, and forms little cells somewhat similar to the coral insect. These insects not only make the legs appear very unsightly, but burrowing into the flesh of the bird, as they do, cause considerable worry and annoyance. Poultry kept upon dry, chalky ground, are more susceptible to this complaint than when the same is rich loamy soil.

Bathe the legs daily in warm water, and scrub them lightly with a nail brush. Dry thoroughly, and apply either a mixture of half creosote and lard, half sulphur and lard, or pure paraffin, working it well under the scales by the aid of a tooth brush. No case is hopeless if this system is persevered with, and often a week or two's daily attention will get the legs into good order again, when a little vaseline is beneficial.

Tying Down Dead Fowls for Show.

Different societies have sometimes different rules in reference to table poultry; with some the birds may be plucked all over, with the exception of head and neck, which plan we consider infinitely the best, but at other exhibitions the feathers at the ends of the wings must be left on. Then again some rules prohibit the tying down of the bird, the hocks alone being tied together, done in which way the fowl is by no means shown off to the best advantage. At most shows, however, one is permitted to tie the birds down in any way that seems best to the exhibitor. There are many different ways of doing this, but at present we know of none that shows off the good qualities of the bird better than the following method, which, for all we know to the contrary, we were the first to practice.

Place the fowl on its back, with its head lying towards you. Seize the middle toe of one foot, and make a slight incision into the flesh, near to the ball of the foot. Do the same with the other foot. Now take two pieces of thinish string, and make a slip knot in one end of each, pass these over each middle toe, and into the

incision previously mentioned. Draw the knots tight. Now turn the bird over on to its breast, double the wings back in the usual way, collect up the ends of the two strings attached to the toes, and draw the toes up to, and on to, the wings. Now tie the strings fairly tightly together across the back of the bird, and cut off any loose ends.

Turn the bird again upon its back, and the hocks will be found sticking up towards the breast. Provide yourself with a longish piece of string and a trussing needle. Pass the needle and thread through the muscles of the leg, just above the hock, on the lower side, allowing several inches of the end of the string to remain on the outside. Now press the hock down so that it is about level with the curved portion of the bone extending from the fowl's backbone, and, having squeezed the gizzard, etc., towards the stern, pass the needle through the bone mentioned clean through the body and out again on the opposite side of the bird. Then pass the string through the muscles of the other hock in the same way as at starting, only this time the needle will enter from the inside of the leg instead of from the outside. Having gone so far, the only thing now to do is to turn the needle round and come back again in an exactly similar way, only passing the needle through different holes, say, a quarter to half an inch from the first holes, and take care not to entangle the string on the return journey. You will thus have the two ends of the string hanging down on the outside of the same hock. Draw these tightly together, and, at the same time, work the stern of the fowl's body into shape. Fasten the ends, and cut off close, though not too close, to the knot, and the operation is finished. By this means we have tied down many winners, including several firsts, seconds, and gold medal winners at the Dairy and other large table poultry shows.

Final Preparations.

We now come to those preparations which become necessary just prior to despatching the birds to a show.

The feet and legs should first receive attention. Dip them into hot water. Take a nail brush and soap, and give them a good scrubbing. These directions, of course, applying to clean legged, or only slightly feathered legged varieties. By this washing the legs will generally be much improved in their appearances, but it will often be found that dirt has worked its way under the scales, and cannot be dislodged by the brush. This dirt should, however, be carefully cleaned away, either by inserting a thin piece of hard boxwood under the scales or by employing a small blade in a pocket knife. We invariably use ourselves the small blade attached to some knives for the purpose of cleaning one's nails. It is almost impossible to do this properly alone, an assistant should hold the bird with both hands across its wings and body and it will then be found a very simple matter, though at times somewhat tedious; in fact, if the legs are very bad, it is best to tackle them some little time before the day that the birds must leave.

Having cleaned the legs and dried them with a towel, take a tooth brush, or small and fairly soft nail brush, and wash the comb and face, and if the lobes are red these also as well as the wattles. If the lobe is white, it is best to use a sponge, but at times a not too hard tooth brush is very handy in getting the dirt away from slight creases which appear in almost every lobe. Now dry the face, etc., thoroughly, and apply to the legs a little oil or vaseline, wiping the same dry, or otherwise dirt is liable to stick to them and completely spoil the effect. For the comb, face, wattles, and lobes (if red) a little of either of the following may be used:—Half vinegar and half salad oil, vinegar and water, cocoa-nut oil and turmeric, vaseline, salad oil alone, or a little butter. We mention all these different applications because what suits one bird admirably does not always answer the same purpose with another, especially is this the case where the birds are not all kept under the same conditions, so that the exhibitor can test for himself and find out which answers his purpose best.

After a white lobe has been wiped dry, put on a little powdered zinc to prevent it blistering, carefully dusting it off before placing in the hamper.

Now take the bird in the left hand by the shanks and allow its body to rest across your thighs, and with the right hand rub the plumage well down with a soft silk handkerchief. It is sometimes surprising what an amount of gloss is thus created on the plumage, and a thorough good grooming in this way will always repay you for your trouble.

But little now remains to be done, still, if the weather is very cold, three or four drops of eucalyptus oil given in two-thirds of a teaspoonful of water just previous to despatching the birds acts as a preventative to their taking cold.

See that the birds have been well fed on hard corn just before commencing to finally prepare them, and have your exhibition hampers nicely clean and littered with straw, all ready to pop the birds into as each one's toilet is completed, and see that the correct labels are attached to each compartment, as few things are more annoying than to attend a show and find your cockerel in the pullet class and your pullet in that for cockerels, as although personally, when judging, we always endeavour to get such a mistake rectified; still, the exhibitor will have no one but himself to blame if he missed his chance in both classes through such carelessness.

Feeding at Shows.

How very anxious some exhibitors are that their birds should have abundance of food and water whilst they are inside of a show. Many times have we seen such as these frantically rushing all over the show to find the man whose duty it is to look after the bird's wants, in order that he may at once replenish the bird's drinking vessel, which has been empty for the last ten minutes! Others stuff their pockets with corn before they arrive, and at once throw it in to their own exhibits, and, if kind hearted, will often give some to neighbouring pens, which are straining their necks to reach it, but, less contented than a certain too familiar infant, they themselves will not be happy when they get it. Most fowls at a show become excited, hot and feverish, and abundance of food and water at such times is by no means desirable. Besides, the bird being so closely confined it cannot consume the food it swallows anything like as rapidly as when at liberty, more especially is this the case with hard corn. We consider if the birds are fairly fed, not by any means too liberally—in the morning and afternoon, and that if a fair size drinking vessel is provided, and does not get upset, and the same is half filled in the morning and half filled again in the evening, that not only is this amount of watering and feeding amply sufficient, but that the fowls will stand the excitement of showing infinitely better than if they received all that they were willing to eat and drink.

We feel sure too, that it would be conducive to the bird's health if no hard corn was allowed at such times, but biscuit meal given in its place, and if green food or finely chopped swedes could be provided in the middle of the day our birds would not so frequently return from shows looking much the worst for wear.

The Return Home.

On the return of a bird from the show but little, as a rule, requires your special attention, with the exception, if the weather is cold, of gradually hardening him off, and not at once putting him down in an open run, and by restricting him as regards water, and feeding only on soft food for the first day or two after he returns. A little meat will prove beneficial, and if his appetite is poor a tablespoonful of a solution of chlorate of potash and iron will quickly revive it.

Do not overshow your birds, especially those that you intend breeding from. Just for the sake of winning one more prize the fertility of the bird in the coming breeding season is often spoilt or considerably impaired.

Although the preparation of poultry for the show pen is of considerable importance, the breeding of exhibition stock is still greater, and we propose treating on this subject in Section VII.